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MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

19 March 1951

SUBJECT: NIE Priorities in Relation to the  
NSC Agenda

1. I am greatly concerned by the fact that on two recent occasions when CIA might have made a substantial contribution to the NSC Staff our national estimates (NIE-29 and NIE-6) were completed too late to be of use. I attach a chronology of each case.
2. In the case of Yugoslavia, I was able to make a few specific amendments in the Staff Assistants' draft on the basis of Departmental contributions and the Board's consideration of the original Estimates Staff draft, but nevertheless NSC 18/5 was prepared and submitted to the Council without the benefit of a national estimate on the subject. We did, indeed, get an IAC-approved set of conclusions to the Council one day before it adopted NSC 18/6, but the complete NIE-29 was not adopted by the IAC until a week after the President had approved NSC 18/6.
3. In the case of Iran also I was able to amend the NSC Staff's draft on the basis of NIE-14, but no national estimate of the situation in Iran was available prior to the NSC Staff's adoption of NSC 107. An IAC-approved "crash estimate" has been submitted to the Council a few days before its consideration of NSC 107, but NIE-6 cannot become available until some time after the President will have acted in the matter.
4. These remarks do not reflect any complaint by the NSC Staff. There, in fact, it is considered that we have rendered good service through the specific amendments mentioned and in getting the conclusions of NIE-29 and the "crash estimate" on Iran to the Council before its action on NSC 18/5 and NSC 107. It is apparent, however, that NIE-29 and NIE-6, or at least the finished texts submitted to the IAC, should have reached the NSC Staff in time for simultaneous consideration with the State Department drafts on Yugoslavia and Iran. Better still, some of the obvious defects of those drafts might have been prevented if good national estimates had been available to State when it began, or at least before it completed, the preparation of those drafts.

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5. I must acknowledge some fault for these failures in that I did not succeed in pushing those estimates against the prevailing counter-currents that retarded their completion. My excuses are the distraction from NSC affairs occasioned by the October-December blitz and by my unfortunate call to the Pentagon during February. I trust that that particular combination of adverse circumstances will not occur again.

6. The counter-currents retarding action in response to NSC requirements also require consideration. They seem to me to be:

a. The inescapable priority of "crash" and urgent estimates laid on by the Director and the IAC.

b. Priorities based on fundamental importance (e.g., NIE-25), as distinguished from mere position on the NSC calendar.

c. Priorities based on current interest rather than longer term considerations.

d. Administrative priorities: i.e., a natural tendency to dispose of nearly complete estimates liable to be overtaken, in order to clear the docket.

e. The time given to briefings and procedural discussions, no doubt unavoidable at this stage in the Office's development.

f. A tendency on the part of the Board to run down all conceivable ramifications suggested by the subject. I appreciate the intellectual zest of these pursuits and consider it a most important function of the Board to bring this quality to the consideration of national problems. As exemplified in the case of NIE-29, however, this tendency carried the Board far beyond the point of diminishing returns in relation to the immediate problem and revealed a lack of a sense of proportion and timing attributable to inexperience.

g. That familiar devil, the hair-splitting and nit-picking of substantially agreeable texts in the pursuit of perfection. This is the perversion of a good quality, becoming a defect only when pursued without a sense of proportion and of the passage of time, as above.

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7. Some of these factors are beyond control and others will be obviated as the Office and Board get into their stride. In general, however, I would suggest that there is need for some more positive traffic control among the various projects before the Staff and Board.

8. As NSC Staff Assistant and with a view to the NSC calender, I recommend in particular that priority be given to the following projects:



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**NIE-29: YUGOSLAVIA**

\*September Revision of NSC 18/4 on the NSC Agenda,  
"awaiting initial draft by State."  
26 Oct. IAC included Yugoslavia on priority list.  
16 Nov. IAC adopted NIE-7 as an interim report.  
30 Jan. NIE-29 initiated at OIR request, as a  
matter of urgency.  
1 Feb. IAC representatives agreed on terms of  
reference.  
9 Feb. Departmental contributions received.  
\*13 Feb. State draft received by NSC Staff Assistants.  
14 Feb. Estimates Staff draft submitted to the Board.  
16 Feb. Board considered Staff draft.  
\*19 Feb. NSC Staff Assistants revised and adopted State  
draft.  
20 Feb. Board considered a revised draft NIE-29.  
21 Feb. Board considered further revisions.  
23 Feb. Board considered further revisions.  
24 Feb. Board adopted a revised draft NIE-29.  
\*27 Feb. Senior NSC Staff adopted NSC 18/5.  
1 Mar. IAC representatives agreed on Conclusions  
of NIE-29.  
\* 2 Mar. Senior NSC Staff adopted supporting study  
(Annex).  
5 Mar. IAC adopted Conclusions of NIE-29.  
\* 7 Mar. NSC adopted NSC 18/6.  
Board sent revised Discussion to the Agencies.  
\* 9 Mar. President approved NSC 18/6.  
12 Mar. IAC representatives agreed on Discussion.  
15 Mar. IAC adopted NIE-29.

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NIE-6, IRAN

- \* 25 Oct. Senior NSC Staff rejected a draft report on Iran and called for a complete reassessment.
- 26 Oct. IAC included Iran in its list of priority projects.
- 11 Nov. IAC adopted terms of reference for NIE-6.
- 30 Nov. IAC adopted IAC-D-7 in re. terms of reference. Revision of terms of reference undertaken.
- 15 Dec. NIE-6 reassigned in view of [ ] departure.
- 3 Jan. Revised terms of reference submitted to the Board.
- 8 Jan. Board's terms of reference sent to the IAC agencies.
- 12 Jan. IAC representatives agreed on terms of reference.
- \* 18 Jan. Senior NSC Staff directed active preparation of a report on Iran.
- 19 Jan. Board advised of new urgency in re. NIE-6.
- 30 Jan. Departmental contributions received.
- \* 26 Feb. State draft submitted to NSC Staff Assistants.
- 2 Mar. Staff draft submitted to the Board.
- 7 Mar. Rasmussen shot.
- 8 Mar. Staff draft considered by the Board, State draft by the NSC Staff Assistants.
- 10 Mar. Revised draft submitted to the Board.
- \* 13 Mar. Senior NSC Staff adopted report on Iran (NSC 107).
- 14 Mar. Board considered revised draft on Iran.
- 15 Mar. Board and IAC adopted "crash estimate."

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The NSC will act on NSC 107 on 21 March, with the benefit of the "crash estimate," but without NIE-6. A further revision of NIE-6 may be adopted by the Board before 21 March, but IAC coordination will remain to be accomplished.

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